

# A Man in the Open

by Roger Pocock

Illustrations by  
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## SYNOPSIS.

The story opens with Jesse Smith relating the story of his early life in Labrador and of the death of his father. Jesse becomes a sailor. His mother marries the master of the ship and both are lost in the wreck of the vessel. Jesse becomes a cowboy in Texas. He marries Polly, a singer of questionable morals, who later is reported to have committed suicide. Jesse becomes a rancher and moves to British Columbia. Kate Trevor takes up the narrative. Unhappily married, she contemplates suicide, but changes her mind after meeting Jesse. Jesse rescues Kate from her drink-maddened husband who attempts to kill her. Trevor loses his life in the Rapids. Kate rejects offers of grand opera managers to return to the stage and marries Jesse. Their married life starts out happily. Kate succumbs to the pleadings of a composer to return to the stage and runs away with him. She rescues Widow O'Flynn from her burning house, is badly burned herself and returns home, where Jesse rescues her with open arms. Jesse calls on neighbors and plans to capture cattle thieves. Kate is rescued from the hands of the bandits. Jesse is captured by the robbers, but by a clever ruse makes prisoners of the robbers. They are turned over to a United States marshal, who has arrived with extradition papers. Jesse takes charge of the outlaw chief. Billy O'Flynn, having promised the chief to keep him out of his profession, he takes Billy to Vancouver and the chief is hanged. A man is born to Kate and Jesse and is named David. Jesse receives a letter from his first wife, Polly, in which she tells him she deceived him into thinking she had killed herself. For the honor of Kate and their son, father and mother separate. Kate and David go to England to live. Four years later Billy O'Flynn arrives and tells Kate how Jesse has been ruined and ostracized through the vindictiveness of Polly. Kate arrives in British Columbia, plans to help old friends and defeat the plots of Polly. Provisions are made for a time to save Jesse's life. He hears of Kate's arrival and of her plans. Brooke, a former bandit and intimate of Polly, convinces Kate to interest her in a scheme to betray Polly to his own financial advantage. She refuses.

## CHAPTER V.

### The Cargador.

#### Kate's Narrative.

It was sixty degrees below zero. The moonlight lay in silver on the pines, the hundred-and-four-mile cabin, deep buried among the drifts, glittered along the eaves with icicles, the smoke went up into the hush of death, and the light in the frosted window would glow till nearly dawn.

Within, Pete sat upon his shiny bench, rolling waxed end upon his shiny knee, and taunted his double stitches through the night, scarcely feeling the need of sleep. His new aparojos, stacked as they were finished, had gradually crowded poor Mrs. Pete into her last stronghold, the corner between the wood-box and the bunk. Fiercely she resented the filling of her only room with harness, of her bunk with scrap leather, which scratched her, she said. Wedged into her last corner, she would patch, dissembling crooned 'One More River,' or some indecent ballad of the gold mines.

"Mother," Pete would look up from his bench. "You mind when I bring her here right to this very cabin, with Father Jared, and the Baby, David?"

"What makes you hover, Pete?"

"D'ye mind Baby David?"

"Didn't I nurse him?" said the old woman softly. "He'd red hair like his stuck-up mother, blue eyes same as Jesse, and a birthmark on his off kidney. Now, did you ask her about that birthmark?"

"I told her," said Pete, "that a suspicious female, with a face like a grebe and an inquiring mind is wistful to inspect Dave's kidneys."

Mother wagged her head. "I own I'd like to believe Kate Smith is back in this country, but you're such a continuous and enduring liar."

"That's so," said Pete.

One day when the sun shone brightly into the cabin, Billy arrived with a letter from Captain Taylor. Pete would not give it to mother, or read it aloud, or even tell the news. He danced an ungainly hornpipe, and mother had to shake him.

Now what on earth's the matter with yew?" mother boomed over.

"Finish them riggings by first May, graceful old socks, while Pete at his says he."

"Says I'm partner and boss of the outfit, and running the whole shootin' match, and I'll get more wealth than'll patch hell a mile, and

"There's none like Nancy Lee, I trow. Ow! Ow!

"Oh, mother, Bolt's give me a half interest, and ain't this a happy little home, my darlin'!"

At that Mrs. Pete flung her skinny arms around his neck, and the two sally old things sobbed together.

A week later, when, to save Pete a long tramp, Billy rode down with the rations, he found the old people concerned "about this yere partnership."

"Mother allows this Brooke is trash," said Pete, wagging his snowy head, and for all the interest he takes he's mostly corpse. That's shorely holes in my skin bar."

Billy read the letter thoughtfully.

"Brooke been to see the riggings?" he asked.

"Once in December. He don't know nothin', either."

"Wonder what he wants?"

"Smells mean, eh?"

"A mean smell, Pete."

Billy had spent the week tracking down the two bad characters who had inserted as witnesses to a false agree-

ment. Their confession was now in evidence against Brooke, in case he dared repudiate Mathson's rights as partner, but there was no need to alarm the cargador. So Billy changed the subject, demanding tea, and there was a fine gossip.

Once after his Saturday's tramp up the great hill, Pete returned looking very old. "I axed Bolt," he explained, "about this yere partnership."

"Well?" asked mother sharply.

"Well?"

"Bolt says that's pigs with pink bows to their tails, just stretchin' and stretchin' around his sty."

The old woman turned her back, for Pete was crying.

In April there came a rush of warmth out of the west, licking up all the snow, save only on that high plateau where the Hundred Mile and Spite House seemed to wait and wait in the white silence.

Pete sat under a roof of cedar shakes which he had built to shelter the new "riggings." He was riveting the last of sixty hackamores, as he dreamed of the great north trail, of open meadows by the Hagwilgaet, of the heaven-piercing spire of Tsegor-dinlth at the Forks of Skeena.

"Mother," he said, "I'm no slouch of a cargador. Them red gin cases is still in rig for kitchen boxes, and it's all complete. The mules is fattening good, I hear, and the men's the same as last summer, all worth their feed, too."

But mother, grim and fierce in the throes of her spring cleaning, had not come to admire. "Pete," she shrilled, "two more buckets of water, and yew jest git a move on. And how long hev yew bin promisin' to whittle me them clothes-pins? Now jest yew bustle, Pete, or I'll get right ugly."

Pete only cut from the plug into his palm, and rolled the tobacco small for his corn-cob pipe. His winter veritudo was ended, and he was master, the cargador before whom all men bow in the dread northlands. Mother went off content to carry her own water, and Pete, with something of a flourish, lighted his pipe.

"Mother!" Pete let out a sharp call, and forgetting her business, mother came quite humbly, as though to heel. "Yes, Pete?"

He pointed with his pipe at a distant horseman rounding the flank of the hill.

"Brooke?" she whispered, both gnarled rheumatic hands clutched at her heart.

"I reckon," said Pete cheerfully. "Thinks he's a circus procession, sorrel's clattering a loose near-hind shoe, and her mouth just bleeding as he saws with that spade bit. He's a sure polecat. Trets down-hill, too, and suffers in his tail. Incompetent, mother. Look at his feet. He's bad as a stale salmon, rotten to the bones. Been drinking, too."

Brooke drew up and dismounted, leaving his rein on the horse's neck, instead of dropping it to the ground. When Brooke moved to sit on an aparojo Pete ordered him to one of

the kitchen boxes. "Not Bolt himself may sit on my riggings," said the old gray cargador.

"I thought," said Brooke quite kindly, "that this harness was mine."

"A half-interest," said mother, "surely."

"I fear," said Brooke, "you sort of misunderstood. Old Taylor did say something about your usefulness as a working partner, and, of course, if we hadn't canceled that preposterous contract with the Hudson's Bay Company, there's do doubt your knowledge of the country up north would have been worth paying for. It was, as you say, damned awkward about his being blind as a bat; in fact, I was put to quite a lot of trouble getting the agreement witnessed. However," he produced a document which mother snatched, "it's all there in black and white, and there's the old fool's signature—holds good in any court of law—proves that I've bought and paid for the whole atajo. You needn't claim I haven't a clear title—so you needn't stare at me as if I'd forged the signature. It's straight goods, I tell you."

Mother reeled backward, while she

grabbed Pete's shoulders so that the agreement fluttered to Brooke's feet. She steadied herself, then with a husky croak, "You made Bolt sign that—blind, dying, so he dunno what's on the paper."

"Can you prove that?" asked Brooke indulgently, as though he spoke to children. "If you say things like that, it's criminal libel, and you're both liable to the Skookum House. However," he shrugged his shoulders, and put the agreement away, "I don't want to be hard on you, Pete."

"Mister Mathson," mother hissed at him.

Pete, with a whispered word to mother, rose from his bench, and without appearing to see Mr. Brooke, walked past him across the sunlit yard, and on slowly up the great lifting curve of the road to Hundred Mile House.

The sun was setting behind him when Pete rested at last upon the snowclad summit, and dusk lay in lakes of shadow far below him. At the Hundred he found the lamps alight, and as usual, Billy offered him a drink. "I ain't drinking," said Pete huskily, as he lurched past the bar into the dining-hall, and on to the little room on the right where Captain Taylor lay.

"Bolt!" he whispered.

"That you, Pete? Sit down," said the boss cheerily. "How's the claim, Pete? Getting coarse gold, eh?"

"Gold? Say, Bolt, what's the matter, old fellow?"

"Matter? Why, nothing, Pete," the blind eyes shone keenly; "of course I'm not nearly to bedrock yet, and as to what I owe you've jolly well got to wait. How's old Calamity? I got Lost Creek Jim to work at last."

Was the boss dreaming of old times on Lightning Creek?

"Watty's in the mail," said Bolt. Watty had been dead these thirty years.

Then Pete sat down on the bedside, and the two miners prattled about the new flume, and the price of flour in a camp now overgrown with jungle.

A word to Billy would have been enough to get the aparojos to a place of safety, pending the settlement of Pete's just claim as partner. But the cargador knew well that death had come to take the one man he loved. This was no time for sordid business, disturbing Bolt Taylor's peace. It was better to go quietly.

The sky was full of stars as Pete went homeward. The stars were big and round; the forest in an ecstasy kept vigil all alert, all silent, and the little streams of the thaw were saying their prayers before the frost sleep of the later hours. The man was at peace. It is not so very much to be cargador; but it is a very big thing indeed to be unselfish. The trees kept vigil, the little streams crooned sleepy prayers, the stars in glory humbly served as lamps, and the man made no cry in his pain. Far down in the valley he saw a red flame rise.

Mother saw Brooke rid off to inspect his Star mules in their pasture far away down the Fraser Canon. She blacked the stove with mallee, she shook the bedding in enmity, set the furniture to rights as though it were being punished, then sat on the damp floor brooding, while twilight deepened over a world of treachery. Brooke was a thief, the lying boss had used Pete and thrown him away wrung dry. And Pete was an old fool who would forgive.

She had dreaded the lonely summer when she was left with only squirrels for company. Now Pete would be "settlin' around, ruined, and out of work, the man who had been used and thrown aside, the laughing-stock of the teamsters who saw his pride brought low.

The frontier breeds fierce women, with narrow venomous enmities toward the foes of the house. Even if Pete suffered, Brooke should not prosper, or the boss who had failed her man. Mother dragged two five-gallon cans of petroleum from the lean-to, and staggering under their weight, poured the oil over all Brooke's harness. Breathing heavily with her labor, she carried loads of swampy hay, and cordwood, until the aparojos were but part of a bonfire. Then with a brand from the stove she set the hay alight. There should be no public shame to break Pete's heart, there should be no pack-train unless he were cargador.

Pete stood beside the ashes, searching mother's face with his slow brooding eyes. Her burning rage was gone, and she was afraid, for now she thought too late of all his loving pride in the work, the greatness of the thing which his knowledge and skill had made. That she had burned. Understanding how love had made this blunder, Pete said no word. He only knew that Bolt had paid him seven hundred dollars cash and kind, which must be returned. In silence he turned away, and once more faced the terrible hill which led to the Hundred Mile House.

The spring was in my blood, and I

could not sleep. Can any creature sleep when the spring's sweet, restless air calls to all nature? Even the little birds were coming back to the north, for now and again as I strolled along the road I would hear a sleepy twitter. "Isn't it dawn yet?" "Not yet, have another nap." So I came to the brow of the great hill whence I should see the dawn.

I was turning back refreshed toward my duty, when I heard something moan. The sound came from underneath a pine tree, the one at the very top of the long climb which Pete had blazed with his inscription, "Got that." With my heart in my mouth I went to find out what was the matter, and so discovered the old cargador crouched down against the trunk.

"Pete," I asked in a very shaky voice, "what on earth's the matter?"

"Dying, mum."

"But it's too damp here. Why, you'll catch your death of cold."

"That would never do. Say, mum, how's Bolt?"

"Oh, ever so much better."

"Can't do it," said Pete, "if I died first he'd have the joke on me."

"Wouldn't you like a hot rum?" Pete staggered to his feet. "I'd go for that," he sighed, "just like one man."

So he took my arm, and I helped him along the road.

"She burned them riggings," he said.

"Mother?"

"Yes, Brooke came inspecting them riggings, so mother burned 'em."

"Won't that be rather awkward?"

"Some. You see, mum, Bolt paid me four hundred and five dollars cash, so I come to return him the money."

I didn't quite understand. "You see, Pete," I suggested, "you and Brooke are the owners. Don't you owe half to yourself and half to Brooke?"

"Well, if that's so, I'll pay myself and owe the rest to Brooke. But then he claims the whole Star atajo."

"In that case you owe the whole of the money to Brooke."

"I don't mind owing Brooke," Pete felt so much better that he was able to walk without help. "Brooke's gone on to inspect mules. I wonder how he'll get on with them mules?"

As it happened, Jesse was an actual witness to Mr. Brooke's inspection of the Star mules at their pasture below his ranch. Here is his narrative:

"The trouble for these poor mules was that they followed a false goddess. Their bell mare Prue ought to have been old enough to know better, but at the age of twenty-three, with gray hair and bald withers, she was still female."

"She and her mules had been grazing maybe half a mile when my new stallion, young Jehoshaphat, happened along with his harem of twenty-five mares, smelling down wind for a drink. The mares looked so snug and grass-fat they could scarcely waddle, but Jehoshaphat was full of sinful pride, waiting high step at the sight of Prue."

"You should have seen Prue playing up innocent modesty in front of Jehoshaphat, pretending she wasn't there, making believe she was too sudden, didn't approve of the gentleman, flattering his vanity with all sorts of airs and graces. Prue paraded herself along in front of the harem to spite the married mares, and all her

mules came worshipping along in pursuit. Those mares gave the mules the biggest kicking you ever saw in your life."

"There was me lying on Face Rock like a little boy at a circus, and there was the performance proceeding so joyful that I never saw Brooke until he rode down right into the middle of the fun. Jehoshaphat got mad and went from Brooke, chasing him around the pasture. Prue chased Jehoshaphat, the mules chased Prue, the harem bit and kicked at everybody. Brooke galloped delicious in all directions, and I laughed until I could hardly hold down the rocks."

"Of course, if Brooke hadn't been a mere mistake on earth, he would have herded gently to the nearest corral, and cut the two outfits apart. But Brooke proceeded to lose his temper, pulled his gun, jumped his wretched sorrel behind a tree, and let drive. He missed the stallion. He shot Prue through the heart."

"There was nothing after that to keep the sixty Star mules together. Some went up the canon, some down, a few even swam the Fraser, but the best of them climbed the big cliffs and vanished into the forest."

"I reckon Pete and his arrieros could collect those mules and break them to loving a new madrina. But with Brooke as cargador, the great Star Pack-train's numbered with the past, and Mathson's partnership is scarce worth arguing."



I Discovered the Old Cargador Crouched Down Against the Trunk.

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"I was sorry to see the fine mules lost, and in my grief I kicked Brooke about one-third of a mile on his way home afoot."

## CHAPTER VI.

### The Black Night.

#### Kate's Narrative.

"I, Boulton Wemyss Taylor, Commander R. N., retired, being of sound mind in a dying body, do hereby make my last will and testament:

"And do appoint the lady known as Madame Scotson my sole executress and trustee of all property which I may die possessed of;

"To pay my just debts, and to administer the remainder on behalf of my grandson, James Taylor,

"Until at his coming of age he shall receive the whole estate, if there is any;

"Save only that I bequeath to Madame Scotson my sword and the Victoria Cross;

"And with regard to burial, it is my will that no money whatever shall be spent, but that my body, wrapped in the flag by right of her majesty's commission, shall be consigned to the earth by my neighbors; that no friend of mine shall be allowed to stand uncovered catching cold, or to wear unseemly black clothing at the service of the resurrection, or to toll bells which should be pealed when the soul passes to God, or to make pretense or parade of grief for one who is glad to go."

The months of nursing were ended. No longer should Nurse Pantan and I be afraid when our patient was good, or rejoice when fractious whims and difficult absurdities marked those rallies in which he fought off death. At the last, after many hours of silence, he asked me in a boyish voice if he might go up-stairs to see his uniform. In his dreams he was leaving school to enter the royal navy.

Billy was away on an errand to the Falls, and it was Nurse Pantan's watch below, when at ten in the evening I saw the change come very suddenly. The face of my dear friend, no longer old, but timeless, reflected an unearthly majesty.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Gold and Silver Coinage.

Gold and silver coins were authorized at the same time by an act of congress in 1792, but copper coins, cents and half cents, were issued before either gold or silver.

The coinage of copper cents and half cents began in 1793, of silver coins in 1794 and gold in 1795. The first gold coins issued were the eagle, or ten-dollar piece, and half and quarter eagles. The double eagle, twenty-dollar gold piece, was not issued till 1849, and the only piece of that year known to be in existence is in the mint at Philadelphia. From 1849 to 1881 not a single twenty-dollar gold piece was coined, but since 1881 the coinage has been continuous.

## HIS BRAIN WORKED SLOWLY

Small Boy Turned Statement Made by His Teacher to Good Advantage.

"Strange to say," said the school-teacher, addressing his class of boys, "our brain acts as a telephone to the different parts of our body. Unconsciously, before we move our feet or hands, the message comes from the brain."

"Jack Murphy, what are you grinning at?" he demanded.

"I was thinking of somethin', sir," came the answer.

"Well, think of something that'll do your brain a little good!" retorted the master.

"Here, come out of that!"—as another grin spread itself over the saucy youngster's face. "Just stand behind the board for half an hour, and I'll give you something to grin about afterward!"

At the expiration of the lesson Murphy was recalled.

"Hold your hand out!" demanded the teacher, switching his cane.

No response from the stolid Murphy, who appeared to be thinking hard.

"Do you hear me, Murphy?" exclaimed the exasperated man.

"Yes, sir," he answered, "but my brain hasn't sent the message down yet!"

Progressive Saskatchewan.

A traveler was asked by a fellow passenger who had just boarded the train at—well, call it Boosterville, Saskatchewan. "Well, what do you think of Boosterville?" The traveler gave his testimony, which was to the effect that he thought Boosterville was a real live town, a cute town, a town which meant to get there and which had a great future ahead of it, a town which had made remarkable progress during the short time it had been in existence. "When were you there?" inquired the man from Boosterville. "Bout three weeks back," the traveler replied. "Gee!" cried the Boostervillean in astonishment that such implied ignorance could be.

"Gee! You oughter seen it this mornin'!"—Canadian News.

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Putnam Fadeless Dyes color in cold water. Adv.

The hen that cackles loudest doesn't always lay the biggest egg.

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